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ABSTRACT

A sample of 286 University of Maryland, College Park, undergraduates were surveyed on their participation in and their perception of the intramural sports program and related activities of the institution. Ninety-three percent of those surveyed was aware of the intramural program and 43 percent indicated that they participated (70 percent male, 30 percent female). The most common reasons for participation were fun (47 percent) and physical exercise (23 percent). Women were more likely than men to participate for physical exercise, meeting people, or because friends expected it. Those who did not participate did not do so primarily because of time and work conflicts. Women were more likely than men to decline participation because of lack of time or because they lacked information. While students generally gave positive ratings to all aspects of the intramural program, those that were rated lowest were publicity, officiating, and equipment. Details of participation in particular activities are included. (Author/LB)

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UNIVERSITY STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND PERCEPTION OF INTRAMURAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Suzanne Zuercher, William E. Sedlacek and
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Research Report # 11-80

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SUMMARY

286 University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) undergraduates were surveyed on their participation in and their perception of the intramural sports program and related activities. Ninety-three percent of the sample was aware of the intramural program and 43% indicated that they participated (70% male, 30% female). The most common reasons for participation were fun (47%) and physical exercise (23%). Women were more likely than men to participate for physical exercise, meeting people, or because friends expected it. Those who did not participate did not do so primarily because of time and work conflicts. Women were more likely than men to decline participation because of lack of time or because they lacked information. While students generally gave positive ratings to all aspects of the intramural program, those which were rated lowest were publicity, officiating, and equipment. Details of participation in particular activities and a discussion of the implications of the results are included.

"Good evaluation is central to the continued development of a profession" (Hanson, 1978). However, the area of program evaluation or evaluative research long has been overlooked in the field of higher education. Most agencies have found evaluative research to be of so little use that it is rarely pursued, due in large part to the fact that a research study or an evaluation of a program almost never results in major change in practice (Oetting, 1976b)

Recently there have been increasing calls to undertake evaluation studies for the sake of accountability. "What do we do for and to students?" has become a question of ever increasing importance. Pace and Friedlander (1978) have stated that evaluation has frequently become a requirement for the granting of money for new programs or the continuation of old ones.

Yet in the midst of growing interest in the evaluation of student services, the question posed by Oetting (1976a) remains unanswered: "Why isn't evaluation a part of all programs?". It seemed undeniable to him that we should know how our programs work; but in spite of its necessity, information of this kind usually has not been gathered. Hanson (1978) observed that this need for, but lack of program evaluation has led to "frustration, if not panic and chaos" (p. viii); a result of both inadequate training of staff members and enforced accountability in higher education.

This study is the first step in an effort to incorporate program evaluation into the ongoing operations of the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), Department of Intramural Sports and Recreation, and is a joint venture with the research staff of the University Counseling Center. Its purpose is to determine student experiences with and perceptions of the intramural program at UMCP. With the growing interest in athletics for women, a particular focus of the study will be to compare men and women students.

The growing diversity of recreational sports programs has led to a continually

expanding need for more equipment, facilities, and staff; and thus more money to administer them. Often these programs tend to expand at a more rapid rate than their budgets allow. University and college administrators increasingly demand a more precise accountability of student activity finances and cost-benefit analyses. "Because of an ever increasing need for Recreational Sports Departments to carefully budget their money, administrators are searching for methods of evaluating their programs in order to better plan and budget." (Larson, 1978).

Few evaluation studies of recreation and intramural programs are extant in the literature. Most studies tend to be designed for exposure to appropriate on-campus administrators and survey students as to their frequency of participation in various activities and their opinions about the services provided. Typical survey questions involve such topics as students' satisfaction with facilities, equipment, officiating, times activities are offered, level of competitiveness stressed, criteria for awards, and advertisement of events. Students are also often asked what they like and dislike about an intramural program and what changes could be made to encourage more participation or to increase satisfaction among participants.

Intramural program studies of this type have been done at several colleges and universities in recent years. Some of these include the University of Massachusetts, Montana State University, the University of Texas at Austin, and the University of Nigeria.

Maas (1977) used a two page written questionnaire to survey 539 Iowa State University students on their perceptions of the campus intramural program. His findings indicated that most students (95%) had heard of the intramural program, over 60% of those surveyed had participated in some form of intramurals, more males participated than females, a majority of respondents liked the competitive nature of the program, and that many students thought that officiating and publicity could be improved.

Hammitt and Hammitt (1978) reported on a pilot study of University of Michigan recreation facility users, based on a sample of 414 self-administered questionnaires completed at 3 campus sites. The results showed that students saw physical exercise as an important reason to use recreation facilities, but few were interested in competition or social intereaction. Most students were willing to pay a higher student activity fee in order to keep the facilities open for more hours each week.

Foster, Sedlacek, and Hardwick (1977) compared recreation preferences of commuter and resident students at UMCP. This study, in which 407 undergraduates were surveyed, revealed that resident students, as compared to commuters: "engaged in nearly twice as many recreational activities during the school year, preferred participant to spectator-sports, were more informed about campus recreational opportunities when they first enrolled, were more likely to feel that campus facilities met their recreational needs, and were less likely to use recreational facilities off-campus."

Finally, Stevenson, Reznik, and Zuercher (1979) developed an evaluative tool which indicated user and non-user interests in and perceptions about recreational sports programs at colleges and universities. Their work has served as the model for the proposed study at UMCP. The authors completed usable telephone interviews with 643 students at the University of Michigan. Data analysis showed that 65% of the students participated in programs offered by the Recreational Sports Department, nearly twice as many males as females participated, and the primary reason students did not participate was lack of time.

PROCEDURES

A telephone survey was administered to 286 (83% return rate) randomly sampled full time undergraduates at the University of Maryland, College Park, by six undergraduate workers who were trained to administer the question-

naire by role play techniques. Results will be expressed in means and percentages, and any significant differences noted are chi-square or t-tests at the .05 level.

RESULTS

Fifty two percent of the sample was male, 48% were females, 18% were freshmen, 10 % were sophomores, 23% were juniors and 50% were seniors. Forty-seven percent lived in residence halls, 30% lived with their parents, 17% lived off campus but not with parents, and 6% lived in a fraternity or sorority.

Ninety-three percent of the sample was aware that the University offered an intramural sports program. Of these, 54% were male and 46% were female. Although most students were aware that the intramural program existed, only 43% indicated that they participated. Significantly more of these participants were male (70%) than female (30%).

Intramural participants

Overall, the most common intramural activities participated in by students were softball (45%), touch football (39%), basketball (38%), volleyball (23%), box lacrosse (14%), soccer (14%), tennis (9%), track (9%), cross country (7%), golf (7%) and one-on-one basketball (7%). Men were significantly more likely than women to play touch football (100% vs 0%), basketball (45% vs 24%) and softball (49% vs 38%), while women were significantly more likely to participate in volleyball (38% vs. 16%). Participants spent an average (median) of 2.69 hours per weeks on their intramural activities, with women spending significant more time (3.80 hours) than men (2.31 hours). Participants in intramurals also engaged in a sport, physical or recreational activity outside the intramural program while on campus. The most popular of these were basketball (22%), jogging (18%) softball (14 %), swimming (11 %), weightlifting (9 %), racquetball, and

rugby and tennis (each 7%). While significantly more men played basketball (31% vs 0%) or touch football (7% vs 0%) on campus outside the intramural program, women were significantly more likely to jog (35% vs. 9%), weightlift (19% vs. 5%). swim (19% vs. 7%) or play rugby (10% vs. 5%) than were men.

The most common reasons students participated in intramural activities were fun (47%), physical exercise (23%), my organization needs the points (13%), to meet or be with people (11%), competition (6%), my friends expect me to (2%). Women were significantly more likely to participate for physical exercise (33% vs 21%), to meet people (12% vs 7%), or because their friends expected it (6% vs 0%). Men were significantly more likely to participate because their organization needed the points (17% vs. 6%) or for competition (9% vs. 0%).

Intramural Nonparticipants

The 57% of the sample (65% female; 35% male) that did not participate in intramural activities did engage in a number of sports, physical or recreational activities while on campus. Thirteen percent jogged, 8% swam, 8% played tennis, 7% played basketball and 7% played racquetball. Significant sex differences were reported on all these activities, with relatively more women jogging (21% vs 0%), playing tennis (13% vs 2%), and swimming (11% vs 5%), while more men played basketball (18% vs 2%) and racquetball (18% vs 2%).

Of the nonparticipants in intramurals, 28% reported engaging in an off-campus sport, physical or recreational activity. A wide variety of activities were reporte Males were more likely to play basketball and hockey and fence and females were more likely to bowl, ice skate, roller skate, dance or jog than males. Men were also significantly more likely to participate in some off-campus activity (44% vs. 20%). The main reasons reported for not participating in intramural programs were: don't have time (27%), conflicts with work (10%), not interested (11%), lack information about activities (6%), too far from where I live (5%), and conflicts with study

time (4%). Women were significantly more likely to report not having the time (33% vs. 10%), conflicts with study time (7% vs. 1%), or lack of information (9% vs. 3%).

Table 1 shows the ratings by sex of aspects of the intramural programs. Participants were most satisfied with the facilities, participation and entry procedures, and the times activities were offered. They were least satisfied with publicity, officiating, and equipment. Women were significantly more positive about the facilities and the awards and award system than were men, while men were significantly more positive about publicity and equipment than were women.

DISCUSSION

Most students were engaged in some form of sport, athletic or recreational activity, either through intramurals or other on or off-campus activity, while many of the differences in participation in certain activities varied predictably by sex, such as men being more interested in football and basketball and women in volleyball. However, relatively greater female participation in jogging, weightlifting and rugby was unexpected. Women showed more interest in these activities outside the intramural program than within it. Since women tend to participate in intramurals more for exercise, meeting people, or because friends expected it, they appeared less interested in organized competitive activities than men. Women also reported feeling conflicts with time or study time, which further supports this conclusion. However, women were more likely than men to feel they lacked information about the intramural program, and that publicity could be improved.

While students generally gave positive ratings to all aspects of the intramural program, those aspects which were rated lowest were publicity, officiating and equipment. However, it also should be noted that officiating and equipment appear more likely to generate criticism than any other aspects of the program.

Publicity raises a perpetual problem in any student service office. In any complex campus situation, despite what appears to be extensive efforts by staff, some students never seem to "get the word." Certainly optimal efforts at recruiting and publicity should be made, but the writers feel that it is often difficult or impossible to have information available at the point students wish to have it. Often bombarded and overloaded with appeals in a variety of forms, students may tend to ignore or be unable to organize this information. Perhaps less overall but more pointed or creative publicity would be more effective. Results from this study could be used to focus the information and publicity program to cover those areas where it is needed.

In summary, it is hoped that these results will provide a useful purpose in facilitating plans and procedures in intramural programs. Beyond that, the results should be useful to anyone interested in knowing about student life on campus and how periodic assessments of student services and programs can provide for both direction and accountability.

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Table 1.

Means* and Standard Deviations of Ratings of Aspects of Intramural Programs by Participants (N=125)

	Means			Standard Deviations		
	Total	** Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Publicity	2.47	2.65	2.03	1.00	1.21	.90
Facilities	2.99**	2.86	3.71	.86	1.07	.78
Equipment	2.56**	2.70	2.10	.97	.90	.67
Officiating	2.51	2.94	2.68	1.07	1.11	.91
Time Activities Offered	2.93	3.10	2.62	1.10	1.08	1.02
Participation and Entry Procedures	2.96	2.95	2.96	.87	1.20	.58
Awards and Awared System	2.81**	2.78	3.20	.93	.89	.86

* 4 = excellent; 1 = poor

** Differences between males and females significant at .05 level, using t